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TAGS: [TSPA](#) [ETTC](#) [KSCA](#) [PREL](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: TAIWAN SATELLITE PROGRAM GOING NATIVE

REF: A. 06 TAIPEI 02379
[1](#)B. 08 TAIPEI 00213

Classified By: AIT DIRECTOR STEPHEN M. YOUNG FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

[1](#)1. (C) This is an action cable. Please see para. 6

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY. Taiwan's National Space Program Office Director Miao Jiun-jih told us April 1 that the NSPO's existing two satellite programs, the Formosat-2 and Formosat-3, are continuing to operate as scheduled and have exceeded expectations. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has taken special interest in Formosat-3 and has plans to cooperate with NSPO on a follow-on Formosat-5 weather satellite to continue monitoring the weather patterns from the upper atmosphere. Miao also said NSPO has no plans to start any space cooperation with the PRC without direction from the highest levels. NSPO's long-term plans call for Taiwan to develop an indigenous satellite and launcher for scientific use and Taiwan is very keen for U.S. reaction to that plan. END SUMMARY .

FORMOSAT 2 AND 3 EXCEED EXPECTATIONS

[1](#)2. (C) Miao told ESTH officer that Formosat-2, Taiwan's sole remote sensing satellite, has been operating very well, and has so far generated NT\$80 million (USD 2.5 million) in revenue for NSPO. Miao claimed the satellite's primary function is research, and that requests for imagery from academic institutions are free of charge. He estimated that the satellite still had 4-5 years of useful life. The commercial aspect of the satellite is handled through the French firm SPOT. In 2011, a follow-on Formosat-5 is scheduled to be launched. The F-5 will most likely use a U.S. launcher (possibly Space-X), have a 2-meter resolution remote sensing capability, and orbit at 720 km. Because the remote-sensing aspect will require advanced optical imagery acquisition systems, NSPO is hoping to have a foreign partner to help it develop that capability. However, Miao said that this effort has been hampered by technology transfer concerns. NSPO has had unsuccessful discussions with ITT and Ford Aerospace as well as Japanese and Korean firms.

NSPO AND NOAA COOPERATION

[1](#)3. (C) As for Formosat-3, Miao said it is a resounding success, and provides valuable weather data worldwide to the scientific community. He added that NOAA has indicated it wants to work with NSPO to develop a follow-on satellite to monitor weather patterns from the upper atmosphere. Formosat-3 was launched in May 2006 and is expected to continue operating until 2013. As for a successor to

Formosat-3, Miao said NSPO will plan to launch 12, rather than the current 6, micro-satellites. Miao said the satellites' coverage will expand to 8,000 monitoring points per day from the 2,000 currently scheduled. The satellites will be able to receive GPS, Galileo and Glonass signals, thereby improving navigation. NSPO hopes to reach 50/50 cost sharing with NOAA for the project, which will amount to about USD 120 million for each party.

INDIGENOUS LAUNCHER DEVELOPMENT

14. (C) Miao indicated that NSPO's next project will be a Taiwan Small Launch Vehicle (TSLV), a locally-built launcher that NSPO will develop with the Chung-shan Institute of Science and Technology. The TSLV will be used to send locally-developed 50-200kg satellites into orbit. He said a 2012 test launch is scheduled for a 50 kilogram satellite to collect data on disaster management and environmental observation as well as to develop payload instrumentation for scientific research. Miao said NSPO is anxious for U.S. views on the development of TSLV.

NO PROSPECT OF COOPERATION WITH PRC

15. (C) ESTH officer asked Miao about the possibility of Taiwan/PRC cooperation in the space realm. Miao said long-standing NSPO policy bars its staff from traveling to the Mainland or from having any contact with PRC counterparts and that policy is not likely to change barring a high-level decision to the contrary.

COMMENT AND ACTION FOR STATE

16. (C) NSPO has long planned to develop a native launch capability for its satellites. Because the Chung Shan Institute of Science and Technology is an adjunct of the Ministry of National Defense, the involvement of the military in this project is certain to cause concerns. NSPO is aware of U.S. sensitivity on this issue, and is keen to know what the U.S. reaction would be if Taiwan develops a native launch capability for its satellite program. Please advise.

YOUNG